

TALKING POINT

LET'S STRETCH A POINT

If you often **knit larger size garments**, you too will know the frustration of sometimes finding your machine just doesn't have enough needles.

Shelagh Hollingworth

You turn the page of a magazine and there's the very sweater or jacket you've been wanting to make. You then turn to the measurements only to find the pattern doesn't go up to your 'ever-so-slightly-larger-than average' proportions. This may well be because there simply aren't enough needles on the needlebed to cover some of the larger sizes. Here are a few ideas on how to beat this problem.

ADDING A LITTLE GIRTH

This is another way of saying that the all-round measurement of the pattern needs to be increased.

You have probably noticed that most patterns go up at regular intervals, the most popular amount being five centimetres or two inches. If the interval is larger it is possibly because there is a wide pattern involved.

Look first at the interval between the sizes to find this difference and from this you can work out how much larger the finished measurement should be for your own size. For example, if there is a five centimetre interval and the largest size has a finished measurement of, say 117 centimetres, 46 inches to fit a 97 centimetres, 38 inch bust, you will need to add five centimetres for each following size. The next larger size will be 122 centime-

tres, 48 inches to fit 102 centimetres, 40 inch bust and so on. Garments these days tend to be very large so you might consider working the size smaller to avoid any extra work but bear in mind that the designer had a special effect in mind when she started the pattern and you may not end up with quite the look of the garment you see in the photograph. If you decide that you only ever knit garments with five centimetres allowed for ease, a design which is a sloppy overlarge garment on the model, will be tight-fitting on you. At this stage you should also check the rate at which the yarn quantity rises and try to gauge how much more you will need for your larger size.

Now, where to put those extra centimetres? If there are too few needles to cast on more stitches, the answer has to be that you will have to put in extra pieces. It is a hidden bonus that dropped shoulder line garments are so popular at the moment. Adding extra pieces is such a simple task on sweaters and cardigans with this shaping.

The most straightforward way to add extra width is to make straight strips to fit between the side seam edges at the underarm. If, for example, you need to add 10 centimetres, divide this by two and work two separate strips five centimetres wide, each the same length as the side seam of the garment. Since these strips are at the sides the seams are unlikely to show however, if you can sew them with invisible mattress stitch, so much the better.

Now you will have a garment that has a small square inset arm-

hole instead of a true dropped shoulder. Since the garment is pretty over-sized you are not likely to lose that look and you may feel more comfortable with an inset armhole. However, it is vital to remember that left like this the sleeve will not be long enough to fit the armhole. The sleeve length as given by the pattern will almost certainly be long enough, just because you are a cuddly size that doesn't mean that your arms are particularly long, so the only extra part you need to add to the sleeve top is sufficient to fit across the extra strip you have added. Again, you will probably find that the neck shaping will suit you just as it is written, the difference between neck sizing is comparatively small and on an over-sized sweater will be loose fitting anyway.

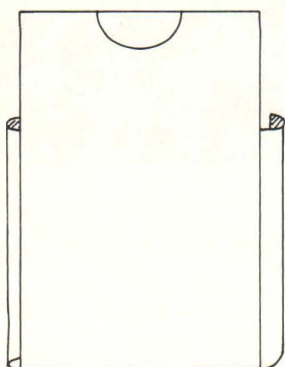
This is an obvious way to add to the all round measurement and for stocking stitch is wonderfully inconspicuous. There are many other ways of adding strips that are so decorative that they look intended. Why not divide a plain sweater into four sections on the back and front? Then you can use different colours for each part and work them separately, making each one a little wider. If you can join them with mattress stitch, this too will look as though it has all been made in one. When it comes to the neck shaping, use that given in the original pattern, dividing it into two. This way you have kept the extra parts at the side edges.

Another way of widening the garment and using up leftover yarns is to make cable strips to insert at the centre back and front. You could have a bit of difficulty here when working out the neck shaping. The easiest way to get around this is to count the width of your cable strip as the straight cast-off centre part of the front neck and only work the decreases to shape the sides. From the back neck deduct the number of stitches corresponding to the cable strip width. For example, you have worked two pieces for the front of the garment: where the original pattern told you to cast off 12 stitches at centre front neck and assuming the cable strip is the equivalent width, ignore the instructions for casting off and decrease at the neck edge as given for the following rows. If the allowance for centre back neck is 36 stitches, you will deduct 12 from 36 making 24 and simply cast off half of this, 12 stitches, at the centre edge of each section for the neck. The cable strip will make up the width of the neck to 36 stitches again when you sew it in.

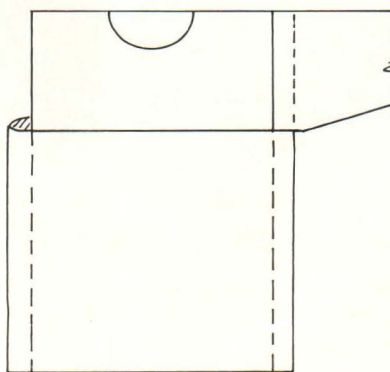
As you see, for this purpose, in order to multiply you have first to divide then you can add as much as you like.

THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT

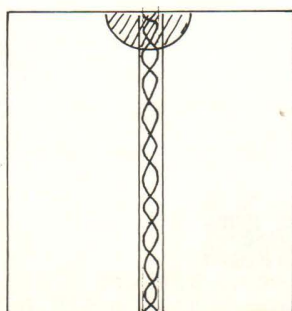
This, surprisingly, can be full of pit-



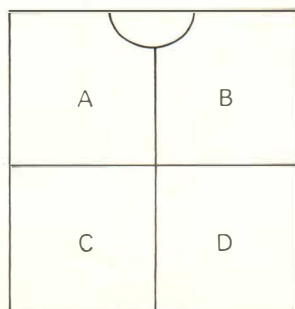
Side pieces in place on front



Extend sleeve top to fit across side extension



Centre cable strip extension



Work four colour sections separately

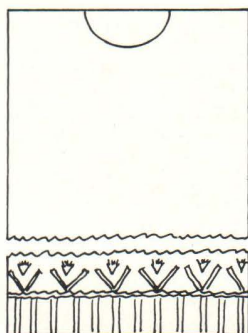
falls. If you like to have your sweaters down to your knees that's fine, provided you only want to lengthen the body section up to the armholes and this can be very effective. Where it becomes tricky is when you want to make the armhole depth longer (or shorter), especially if the garment has 'V' neckline shaping.

With 'V' neckline shaping, the designer has put in a lot of hard work making sure that the number of rows needed to make the shaping fits in with the armhole depth and also allows for a few straight rows before the shoulder cast-off. Reducing the number of rows in the armhole depth means there may not be enough left to accommodate the number of rows needed for the neck shaping. This is something to bear in mind before changing the armhole depth. Of course you can always work the decreases at the 'V' faster than instructed, say every three rows instead of every four rows, but this would give a wider shape and certainly wouldn't result in the same neck shaping as in the photograph of the design.

Since armhole depths generally vary by only about one centimetre, shortening them seems unnecessary. Lengthening them by a few rows is simple but do make sure that you allow for a corresponding extra number of stitches at the top of the sleeve. You can add these at the begin-

ning to make life easier but if you want to increase to add the stitches you must make sure that you have enough rows to do this in the same way as ensuring enough rows for the 'V' neckline mentioned earlier. Try to allow for at least five centimetres of straight knitting after the increases if there is a set-in armhole. On a dropped shoulder-line sweater it can be very effective to cast-off immediately after the increases as this gives a 'batwing' look.

These are just a few suggestions for making garments larger. You probably have many of your own, how about sharing them with us? I'm just about to lengthen a child's sweater by inserting a horizontal strip of Fair Isle border and I think grafting will be the ideal method of joining it in this case.



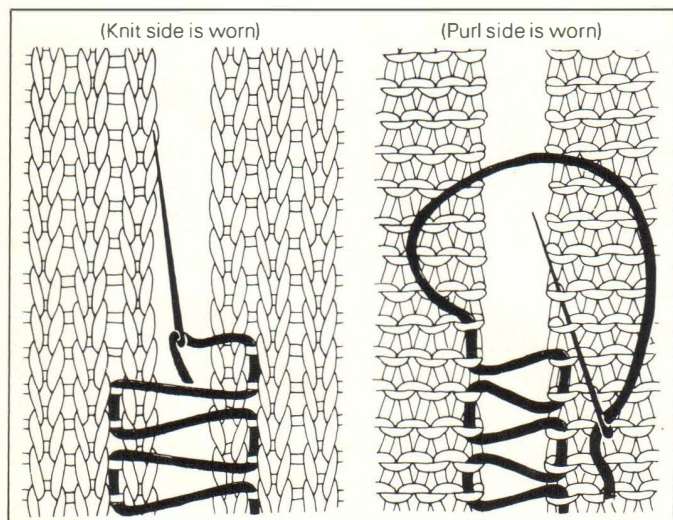
Lengthening child's sweater with Fair Isle border insert grafted on

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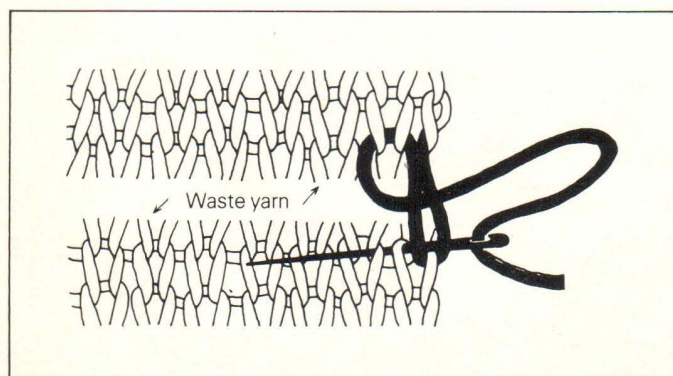
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